

States man-of-war "Kearsarge," commanded by John A. Winslow, found her there, and lay off the port, watching her. By not going into the harbor, Winslow escaped the twenty-four-hour rule. The "Kearsarge" was almost exactly the size of the "Alabama," and the armaments were so nearly alike as to make a very fair match. But her crew were altogether superior in gun-practice, and she had protected her boilers by chains "stoppered" up and down the side amidships, as had been done in the fights at New Orleans and elsewhere. On Sunday morning, June 19, the "Alabama" steamed out of the harbor amid the plaudits of thousands of Englishmen and Frenchmen, who had not a doubt that she was going to certain victory. The "Kearsarge" steamed away as she approached, and drew her off seven or eight miles from the coast. Winslow then turned and closed with his enemy. The two vessels steamed around on opposite sides of a circle half a mile in diameter, firing their starboard guns. The practice on the "Alabama" was very bad; she began firing first, discharged her guns rapidly, and produced little or no effect, though a dozen of her shots struck her antagonist. But when the "Kearsarge" began firing there was war in earnest. Her guns were handled with great skill, and every shot told. One of them cut the mizenmast so that it fell. Another exploded a shell among the crew of the "Alabama's" pivot gun, killing half of them and dismounting the piece. Balls rolled in at the port-holes and swept away the gunners; and several pierced the hull below the water line. The vessels had described seven circles, and the "Alabama's" deck was strewn with the dead, when at the end of an hour she was found to be sinking, her colors were struck, and her officers, with a keen sense of chivalry, threw into the sea the swords that were no longer their own. The "Kearsarge" lowered boats to take off the crew; but suddenly the stern settled, the bow was thrown up into the air, and down went the "Alabama" to the bottom of the British Channel, carrying an unknown number of her men. An English yacht picked up Semmes and about 40 sailors and steamed away to Southampton with them; others were



GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER, U. S. A.

rescued by the boats of the "Kearsarge," and still others were drowned. On the "Kearsarge" only three men were wounded, one mortally.

A score of other Confederate cruisers roamed the seas, to prey upon United States commerce, but none of them became quite so famous as the "Sumter" and the "Alabama." They included the "Shenandoah," which made 38 captures; the "Florida," which made 36; the "Tallahassee," which made 27; the "Tacony," which made 15; and the "Georgia," which made 10. The "Florida" was captured in the harbor of Bahia, Brazil, in October, 1864, by a United States man-of-war, in violation of the neutrality of the port. For this the United States Government apologized to Brazil and ordered the restoration of the "Florida" to the harbor where she was captured. But in Hampton Roads she met with an accident and sank.

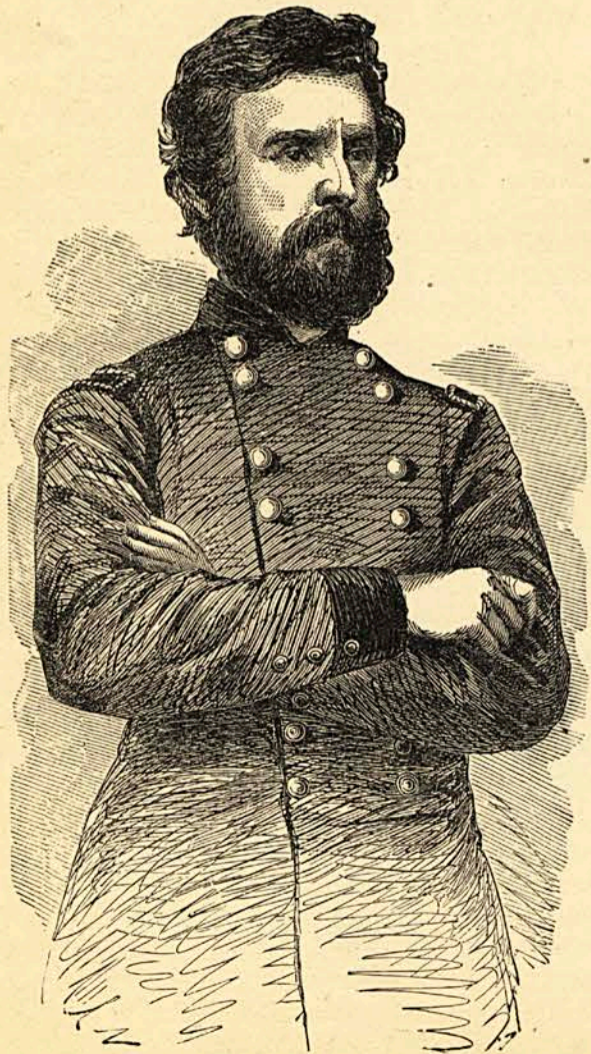
Most of these cruisers were built in British shipyards, and whenever they touched at British ports to obtain supplies and land prisoners, their commanders were ostentatiously welcomed and lionized by the British merchants and officials.

The English builders were proceeding to construct several swift iron-clad cruisers for the Confederate Government, when the United States Government protested so vigorously that the British Government prevented them from leaving port.

In 1856 the great powers of Europe signed at Paris a treaty by which they relinquished the right of privateering, and some of the lesser powers afterward accepted a general invitation to join in it. The United States offered to sign it, on condition that a clause be inserted declaring that private property on the high seas, if not contraband of war, should be exempt from seizure by the public armed vessels of an enemy, as well as by private ones. The powers that had negotiated the treaty declined to make this amendment, and therefore the United States did not become a party to it. When the war of secession began, and the Confederate authorities proclaimed their readiness to issue letters of marque for private vessels to prey upon American commerce, the United States Government offered to accept the treaty without amendment; but England and France declined to permit our Government to join in the treaty then, if its provisions against privateering were to be understood as applying to vessels sent out under Confederate authority. There

the subject was dropped, and while the insurgents were thus left at liberty to do whatever damage they could upon the high seas, the United States Government was also left free to send not only its own cruisers but an unlimited number of privateers against the commerce of any nation with which it might become involved in war. When at the beginning of President Lincoln's administration Mr. Adams was sent out as Minister at London, he carried instructions that included this passage: "If, as the President does not at all apprehend, you shall unhappily find her Majesty's Government tolerating the application of the so-called seceding States, or wavering about it, you will not leave them to suppose for a moment that they can grant that application and remain the friends of the United States. You may even assure them promptly, in that case, that if they determine to recognize, they may at the same time prepare to enter into alliance with the enemies of this republic." England had had a costly experience of American privateering under sail in the war of 1812-15, and she now saw what privateering could become under steam power. While she was rejoicing at the destruction of American merchantmen, she knew what might happen to her own.

Let her become involved in war with the United States, and not only a hundred war-ships but a vast fleet of privateers would at once set sail from American ports, and in a few months her commerce would be swept from every sea. Other considerations were discussed; but it was doubtless this contingency that furnished the controlling reason why the British Government resisted the tempting offers of cotton and free trade, resisted the importunities of Louis Napoleon, resisted the clamor of its more reckless subjects, resisted its own prejudice against republican institutions, and refused to recognize the Southern Confederacy as an independent nation. In 1872 the international court of arbitration, sitting in Geneva, Switzerland, decided that the position taken by the United States Government in regard to responsibility for the Confederate cruisers was right; and that the British Government, for failing to prevent their escape from its ports, must pay the United States fifteen and a half million dollars.



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